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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
25 March 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

El Salvador Situation Report
(As of 1400 EST)

1. A revolt against the Sanchez government, in progress since 0200 this morning, is being led by Colonel Benjamin Mejia and apparently includes many younger army officers. The national guard and the air force so far remain loyal to the government, but have been given an ultimatum to surrender.

2. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He has studied in the Canal Zone and in the US and has been described as friendly toward the US.

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3. Mejia claims to be in control and to have taken President Sanchez prisoner. Sporadic fighting continues in the capital, and air force planes loyal to Sanchez have bombed army installations in the city. Other members of the Sanchez government have taken refuge in the air force headquarters. A spokesman for Mejia announced on the radio that the new junta will dismiss the legislature and supreme court and that the new government will respect its international commitments and "maintain good relations with El Salvador's traditional friends."

4. The revolt is an outgrowth of the unrest and discontent that followed the elections on 20 February (presidential) and 12 March (legislative). Some military officers were unhappy with the choice of Colonel Molina as the presidential candidate for

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the governing party and disappointed that the party, which has had military backing, was so poorly prepared for elections that it had to resort to considerable ballot juggling to defeat the leftist coalition. If the coup is successful, the junta may schedule new elections to recover public confidence and salvage the country's reputation for electoral honesty.

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